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# ¶Note on a Poet's "Rare and Graceful" Tribute to a Painter. \*



**A**MONG the first to recognize Whistler's genius was Swinburne. The poet saw "Symphony in White, No. II : The Little White Girl," which was painted in 1864, in the artist's studio before it was sent to the Royal Academy of 1865. It inspired his poem, "Before the Mirror : Verses under a Picture."

When the picture was sent to the Academy, the poem is said to have been printed on gold paper, fastened somehow to the frame, which, however, has disappeared. In the catalogue of the exhibition two stanzas were printed as a sub-title. They are those beginning, "Come snow, come wind or thunder ;" and "I cannot see what pleasures." Whistler, many years later and after the break with Swinburne, still spoke of the poem as "a rare and graceful tribute from the poet to the painter—a noble recognition of a work by the production of a nobler one."

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Mr. Arthur Studd now owns the picture, which is in the Metropolitan exhibition. It is the familiar three quarter length of a young girl in white standing before a mantel, her head with loosened hair seen in profile reflected in the glass. Her right hand, hanging at her side, holds a Japanese fan "with Hiroshige-like decorations," while the left arm rests on the white mantel ledge in front of a red lacquered box and a blue and white vase. At the right, near the edge of the canvas, are pink and purple azaleas.

Whistler's break with Swinburne was caused by the latter's criticism of the artist's sparkling lecture or talk, the "Ten o'clock," when it was brought out in book form. In the "Fortnightly Review" for June 1888, Swinburne questioned Whistler's sincerity. In the "Gentle Art" Whistler replied with dignity and pathos, and printed in the "World" a letter under the heading, "Freeing a Last Friend."

